



13 May 2016

International Workshop in Rome

TOWARDS THE FIRST SHELTER FOR DOLPHINS IN ITALIAN SEAS: LAV AND MAREVIVO IN COOPERATION WITH THE TETHYS RESEARCH INSTITUTE ARE LAUNCHING THE PILOT PROJECT FOR THE ACCOMMODATION AND CARE OF DOLPHINS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AFTER THEIR RESCUE FROM DOLPHINARIUMS AND STRANDING

*"Towards the first refuge for dolphins in Southern Italy" is the theme of the International Workshop Organized by LAV, MAREVIVO in collaboration with the TETHYS Research Institute and sponsored by ENEA in Rome today (ENEA conference room, 10AM-4PM): a **discussion about dolphin rehabilitation and accommodation after captivity and stranding.***

Among the speakers: **Dr. Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara** (President, Tethys Institute), **Dr. Sandro Mazzariol** (University of Padua, Italy), **Dr. Joan Gonzalvo** (Tethys Institute), **Dr. Frances Gulland** (Marine Mammal Center, California), **Dr. Marco Affronte** (Member of European Parliament and Naturalist), **Dr. Heather Rally**, (Wildlife Veterinarian, specializing in cetacean rehabilitation), **Vanesa Tossenberger** (Policy Director and Cetacean Specialist, **Whale and Dolphin Conservation**). Other experts and scientists will contribute to the first European Workshop on a Shelter for dolphins in the sea.

The Workshop was set up in order to instigate the creation of a shelter at sea for dolphins previously held in captivity and stranded on the beach. At the moment, there are no suitable places to treat, rehabilitate and accommodate dolphins when necessary. After the workshop, the next step will be the development of a feasibility study to facilitate the future creation of a shelter for dolphins in Italy. This will provide a platform for a technical discussion on the currently unsolved problems of both post-captive and beached dolphins, with the ambitious aim of submitting a project for the creation of a sea-haven for dolphins. A document on General Criteria for a Shelter for dolphins will be presented at the event.

When a dolphin is "stranded" or when dolphins in captivity are seized by the authorities or are extracted from dolphinariums that have shut their doors, it is impossible to find temporary or permanent accommodation for these marine mammals in a habitat able to satisfy at least minimally, their natural ethological needs.

The dolphin sea-shelter will therefore offer a solution to two major issues: captive dolphins and beached dolphins.

The shelter for dolphins in Italy is a pilot project in Europe: we hope it will help lay the foundations to ensure the best practices in cetacean care. We also hope that the project will create a precedent and produce "best practices" guidelines for all European countries as well as other parts of the world.

Today cetaceans are perceived as charismatic animals, with intense social interaction and family relationships, complex ethological needs and a highly developed intelligence. Every year in Italy many people come to the rescue of stranded dolphins and oppose their captivity.

The accommodation in semi-natural habitat, caring for and releasing the dolphins at sea whenever possible needs to be made feasible and that is why it is necessary to set up shelters for dolphins at sea.

This conference will enable the exchange of information around the issue and developments of similar projects in the United States and to create the basis for the framework of a feasibility study on the Italian coasts.

Some facts about captive dolphins and beached dolphins:

- ✓ In Europe there are more than 300 bottlenose dolphins in captivity. In Italy all captive dolphins belong to this species. More than 50 countries in the world are home to dolphins
- ✓ Strandings in Italy (2012-2015): 628 total of which 34 found alive (on average 4.9/year). This data must be regarded as an underestimation since many animals in distress are reported near the coast without being rescued or registered.

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